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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1747  
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY COTONOU  
AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA  
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY RABAT  
AMEMBASSY TUNIS  
AMCONSUL KADUNA  
USIA WASHDC 7334

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 04304

E.O. 12356: N/A  
TAGS: [PROP](#) [LY](#) [NI](#)  
SUBJECT: QADHAFI INTERVIEW IN LAGOS NEWSPAPER

¶1. ALMOST AS LOCAL EVIDENCE OF LIBYAN LEADER COLONEL QADHAFI'S CURRENT DIPLOMATIC OFFENSIVE SOUTH OF THE SAHARA, THE INDEPENDENT LAGOS DAILY, THE GUARDIAN, PUBLISHED ON APRIL 15, 1985, THE FOLLOWING EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH HIM, BYLINED BY YEMI OGUNBIYI. IT CLAIMED THAT THE INTERVIEW WAS QADHAFI'S "FIRST WITH AN AFRICAN NEWSPAPER HOUSE OUTSIDE THE ARAB WORLD AND, INDEED, HIS FIRST WITH ANY NEWSPAPER IN SEVERAL YEARS." IT INCLUDED A PICTURE OF QADHAFI TALKING WITH THE ARTICLE'S AUTHOR AND GUARDIAN PUBLISHER MR. ALEX IBRU, REPORTEDLY AT SALAHADDIN MILITARY BARRACKS IN BENGHAZI. QADHAFI SPOKE IN ARABIC AND USED AN INTERPRETER. THE INTERVIEW TOOK PLACE "BARELY TEN DAYS BEFORE OUSTED PRESIDENT JAAFAR JIMEIRY LEFT FOR A VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES IN SEARCH OF AID." QADHAFI WAS CHARACTERIZED AS LUKEWARM TOWARD NIGERIA.

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¶2. BEGIN TEXT:

- GADDAFI DEFENDS LIBYA'S DYNAMIC FOREIGN POLICY

- IN A RARE NEWSPAPER INTERVIEW, THE LEADER OF THE SOCIALIST PEOPLE'S LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRIYA, COLONEL MUAMMAR AL GADDAFI, HAS DENIED THAT HIS SEEMINGLY MILITANT AND AGGRESSIVE FOREIGN POLICY IN AFRICA IS A CAMOUFLAGE FOR ANY EXPANSIONIST AMBITION.

- SPEAKING IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE GUARDIAN AT THE SALAHADDIN MILITARY BARRACKS IN BENGHAZI, LIBYA, COL. GADDAFI ANSWERED A WIDE RANGE OF QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS FORCEFUL STYLE OF POLITICS AND DIPLOMACY.

- IN THE PROCESS, HE STOUTLY DEFENDED HIS DIPLOMATIC ROLE AS A LIBERATING ONE FOR THE CAUSE OF ARAB AND AFRICAN UNITY AND WAS VERY CRITICAL OF THOSE WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS "FOREIGN ENEMIES" WHO WERE DETERMINED TO PORTRAY HIS IMAGE IN VERY BAD LIGHT.

- "LET ME STATE FROM THE OUTSET THAT THE ROLE WE SEE OURSELVES AS PLAYING, NOT ONLY IN AFRICA BUT ALSO IN THE THIRD WORLD, IS A LIBERATING ONE. BUT OUR ENEMIES DO NOT SEE THIS ROLE AS A LIBERATING ONE. THEY HAVE THEIR OWN DELIBERATE MISINTERPRETATION WHICH IS QUITE MISLEADING."

- THE SON OF A BEDUIN ARAB, COL. GADDAFI, 43, CAME TO POWER ON SEPTEMBER 1, 1969, WHEN HE AND A GROUP OF FREE OFFICERS OVERTHREW KING IDRIS IN A BLOODLESS COUP. THEREAFTER, THEY DEDICATED THEMSELVES TO TRANSFORMING THIS LARGE COUNTRY OF A THREE MILLION PEOPLE "FROM A BACKWARD STATE INTO A MODERN NATION."

- EASILY ONE OF THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL LEADERS IN THE WORLD TODAY, GADDAFI HAS EARNED FOR HIMSELF THE EMINENT, IF SOMETIMES PROBLEMATIC REPUTATION OF BEING ONE OF THE MOST ACKNOWLEDGED LEADERS IN THE ARAB WORLD.

- THE GUARDIAN INTERVIEW WAS HIS FIRST WITH AN AFRICAN NEWSPAPER HOUSE OUTSIDE THE ARAB WORLD AND, INDEED, HIS

FIRST WITH ANY NEWSPAPER IN SEVERAL YEARS.

- OF THE GUARDIAN, HE HAD THIS TO SAY: "I HAVE A GREAT OPINION OF YOUR PAPER AND IT DESERVES ALL THE SUPPORT AND PRAISE THAT IT IS RECEIVING. FOR, INDEED, WE NEED REAL AFRICAN NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES WHICH CAN SPEAK UP FOR AFRICA. IT IS SAD ENOUGH THAT AFRICANS GET TO READ ABOUT THEMSELVES ONLY FROM EUROPEAN OR THE AMERICAN MEDIA. I AM PLEASED THAT I CAN MEET WITH YOU AND THAT WE CAN EXCHANGE VIEWS."

- SPEAKING VERY QUIETLY IN ARABIC THROUGH AN INTERPRETER, HIS PLACID FACE BETRAYING AN OUTWARD CALM WHICH JARS SHARPLY WITH HIS CONTROVERSIAL REPUTATION, COL. GADDAFI SPOKE AT SOME LENGTH ON THE PROBLEMS OF ARAB UNITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR A LARGER AFRICAN UNDERSTANDING AND ACCORD.

- REPORTEDLY, HE DEFENDED HIS SUPPORT FOR MANY REGIMES IN AFRICA AND SAW SUCH SUPPORT AS VALID WITHIN THE TOTAL FRAMEWORK OF AN AFRICAN SOLIDARITY AND UNITY.

- "ALL THE EFFORTS TO UNITE WITH EGYPT, SUDAN, SYRIA, ETHIOPIA AND CHAD WHICH YOU REFERRED TO, WERE ATTEMPTS TO UNITE THE ARAB WORLD AS ONE NATION. THE ARABS AS A WHOLE ARE LIKE ONE NATION. THEY SPEAK THE SAME LANGUAGE, HAVE THE SAME ORIGINS AND ABOUT 98 PER CENT HAVE AND PRACTISE ONE FAITH. AND FOR US, THE UNITY OF THE ARAB WORLD IS ONE STEP TOWARDS THE TOTAL UNITY OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENT."

- COL. GADDAFI WAS VERY CRITICAL OF MOST ARAB COUNTRIES WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS REACTIONARY, ESPECIALLY FOR BEING LY DEPENDENT ON WESTERN COUNTRIES FOR THEIR SURVIVAL.

- "UNFORTUNATELY, TOO, THERE ARE QUITE A NUMBER OF NON-ARAB COUNTRIES IN AFRICA WHO ALSO BEHAVE IN SIMILAR MANNER, WHO ARE FOREVER HOPING AND BELIEVING THAT THE WEST WILL BAIL THEM OUT OF THEIR OWN BANKRUPT AND CORRUPT POLICIES. BUT THE REALITY IS THAT THEIR VERY DEPENDENCE ON THE WEST SHORTENS THEIR LIVES (EXCLAMATION POINT)"

- THE INTERVIEW WAS HELD BARELY 10 DAYS BEFORE OUSTED PRESIDENT JAAFAR NIMEIRY OF SUDAN LEFT FOR A VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES IN SEARCH OF AID BEFORE HE WAS SUBSEQUENTLY OVERTHROWN.

- BUT COL. GADDAFI SAVED HIS SEVEREST ATTACKS FOR THOSE WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS ZIONISTS AND IMPERIALIST AGGRESSORS IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

- INSISTING THAT ARABS MUST NOT BE MADE TO BEAR THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF HITLER'S CRIMES, HE REITERATED HIS NOW FAMILIAR CALL, PRESUMABLY ON THE STATE OF ISRAEL, TO RETURN ALL ARAB LANDS.

- ON HIS RELATIONS WITH NIGERIA, HE WAS FAR MORE LUKEWARM AND GUARDED IN HIS REACTIONS.

- "OUR RELATIONS CAN BE BETTER THAN THEY ARE NOW," HE SAID.

- HIS TEPID RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION OF RELATIONS WITH NIGERIA MAY NOT BE UNCONNECTED, POLITICAL OBSERVERS BELIEVE, WITH LIBYA'S ROLE IN CHAD, NIGERIA'S NORTH-EASTERN NEIGHBOUR.

- BUT HE DEFENDED THE INTERVENTION OF LIBYA IN CHAD ALL THE SAME, ARGUING THAT IT WAS NOT IN THE INTEREST OF LIBYA TO HAVE AN UNSTABLE CHAD, SINCE IT ALSO SHARES BORDERS WITH LIBYA.

- PRESSED WHETHER HE KEPT TO THE AGREEMENT ON THE MUTUAL WITHDRAWAL OF TROOPS FROM CHAD REACHED WITH FRANCE, HE RETORTED: "OF COURSE, WE HONOURED THE AGREEMENT. WE WITHDREW OUR TROOPS. THERE WERE RUMOURS, POSSIBLY BEING PUT OUT BY AMERICANS, TO THE EFFECT THAT WE HAD NOT WITH-

DRAWN OUR TROOPS. OBVIOUSLY, FRANCE IS LOOKING FOR AN  
EXCUSE TO COME BACK TO CHAD."

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END TEXT.

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SMITH